



The Works Of Alexander Pope Esq.

In Nine Volumes Complete. With His Last Corrections, Additions, And Improvements; As they were delivered to the Editor a little before his Death

Containing The First of his Letters

Pope, Alexander

London, 1751

Letters to and from Mr. Steele, Mr. Addison, & c.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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LETTERS

TO AND FROM

Mr. STEELE, Mr. ADDISON,
Mr. CONGREVE, etc.

From 1712, to 1715.

LETTER I.

Mr. STEELE to Mr. POPE.

June 1, 1712.

I Am at a solitude, an house between Hampstead and London, wherein Sir Charles Sedley died. This circumstance set me a thinking and ruminating upon the employments in which men of wit exercise themselves. It was said of Sir Charles, who breath'd his last in this room,

*Sedley has that prevailing gentle art,
Which can with a resistless charm impart
The loosest wishes to the chastest heart;*

}
}
}
Raise

*Raise such a conflict, kindle such a fire
Between declining Virtue and Desire,
Till the poor vanquish'd Maid dissolves away
In dreams all night, in sighs and tears all day.*

This was an happy talent to a man of the town, but, I dare say, without presuming to make uncharitable conjectures on the author's present condition, he would rather have had it said of him that he had pray'd,

*Oh thou my voice inspire,
Who touch'd Isaiab's hallow'd lips with fire!*

I have turn'd to every verse and chapter, and think you have preserv'd the sublime heavenly spirit throughout the whole, especially at — *Hark a glad voice — and — The lamb with wolves shall graze —* There is but one line which I think below the original,

He wipes the tears for ever from our eyes.

You have express'd it with a good and pious, but not so exalted and poetical a spirit as the prophet, *The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.* If you agree with me in this, alter it by way of paraphrase or otherwise, that when it comes into a volume it may be amended. Your poem is already better than the Pollio. I am

Your, &c.

L E T T E R

LETTER II.

The Answer.

June 18, 1712.

YOU have oblig'd me with a very kind letter, by which I find you shift the scene of your life from the town to the country, and enjoy that mix'd state which wise men both delight in, and are qualified for. Methinks the moralists and philosophers have generally run too much into extremes in commending entirely either solitude, or publick life. In the former, men for the most part grow useles by too much rest, and in the latter are destroy'd by too much precipitation; as waters lying still, putrify, and are good for nothing, and running violently on do but the more mischief in their passage to others, and are swallow'd up and lost the sooner themselves. Those indeed who can be useful to all states, should be like gentle streams, that not only glide thro' lonely valleys and forests amidst the flocks and the shepherds, but visit populous towns in their course, and are at once of ornament and service to them. But there are another sort of people who seem design'd for solitude, such, I mean, as have more to hide than to show. As for my own part, I am one of those of whom Seneca says, *Tam umbratiles*

umbratiles sunt, ut putent in turbido esse quicquid in luce est. Some men, like some pictures, are fitter for a corner than a full light; and, I believe, such as have a natural bent to solitude (to carry on the former similitude) are like waters, which may be forced into fountains, and exalted into a great height, may make a noble figure and a louder noise, but after all they would run more smoothly, quietly, and plentifully, in their own natural course upon the ground^a. The consideration of this would make me very well contented with the possession only of that Quiet which Cowley calls the companion of Obscurity. But whoever has the Muses too for his companions, can never be idle enough, to be uneasy. Thus, Sir, you see, I would flatter myself into a good opinion of my own way of living. Plutarch just now told me, that 'tis in human life as in a game at tables, where a man may wish for the highest cast, but, if his chance be otherwise, he is e'en to play it well as he can, and to make the best of it. I am,

Your, &c.

^a The foregoing Similitudes our Author had put into verse some years before, and inserted into Mr. Wycherley's poem on *Mix'd*

Life. We find them in the versification very distinct from the rest of that poem. See his posthumous works, octavo, Page 3 and 4. P.

L E T T E R

LETTER III.

TO MR. STEELE.

July 15, 1712.

YOU formerly observ'd to me, that nothing made a more ridiculous figure in a man's life, than the disparity we often find in him sick and well: thus one of an unfortunate constitution is perpetually exhibiting a miserable example of the weakness of his mind, and of his body, in their turns. I have had frequent opportunities of late to consider myself in these different views, and, I hope, have receiv'd some advantage by it, if what Waller says be true, that

*The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
Lets in new light thro' chinks that time has made.*

Then surely sickness, contributing no less than old age to the shaking down this scaffolding of the body, may discover the inward structure more plainly. Sickness is a sort of early old age: it teaches us a diffidence in our earthly state, and inspires us with the thoughts of a future, better than a thousand volumes of philosophers and divines. It gives so warning a concussion to those props of our vanity, our
strength

strength and youth, that we think of fortifying ourselves within, when there is so little dependance upon our out-works. Youth at the very best is but a betrayer of human life in a gentler and smoother manner than age: 'tis like a stream that nourishes a plant upon a bank, and causes it to flourish and blossom to the sight, but at the same time is undermining it at the root in secret. My youth has dealt more fairly and openly with me, it has afforded several prospects of my danger, and given me an advantage not very common to young men, that the attractions of the world have not dazzled me very much; and I begin, where most people end, with a full conviction of the emptiness of all sorts of ambition, and the unsatisfactory nature of all human pleasures. When a smart fit of sickness tells me this scurvy timent of my body will fall in a little time, I am e'en as unconcern'd as was that honest Hibernian, who being in bed in the great storm some years ago, and told the house would tumble over his head, made answer, What care I for the house? I am only a lodger. I fancy 'tis the best time to die when one is in the best humour; and so excessively weak as I now am, I may say with conscience, that I am not at all uneasy at the thought, that many men, whom I never had any esteem for, are likely to enjoy

this world after me. When I reflect what an inconsiderable little atom every single man is, with respect to the whole creation, methinks, 'tis a shame to be concern'd at the removal of such a trivial animal as I am. The morning after my exit, the sun will rise as bright as ever, the flowers smell as sweet, the plants spring as green, the world will proceed in its old course, people will laugh as heartily, and marry as fast, as they were us'd to do. The memory of man, (as it is elegantly express'd in the Book of Wisdom) passeth away as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but one day. There are reasons enough, in the fourth chapter of the same book, to make any young man contented with the prospect of death. "For honour-
 " able age is not that which standeth in
 " length of time, or is measur'd by number of
 " years. But wisdom is the grey hair to men,
 " and an unspotted life is old age. He was
 " taken away speedily, lest wickedness should
 " alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his
 " soul," &c. I am

Your, &c.

LETTER

L E T T E R I V.

T O M r. S T E E L E.

Nov. 7, 1712.

I Was the other day in company with five or six men of some learning; where chancing to mention the famous verses which the Emperor Adrian spoke on his death-bed, they were all agreed that 'twas a piece of gaiety unworthy of that prince in those circumstances. I could not but differ from this opinion: methinks it was by no means a gay, but a very serious soliloquy to his soul at the point of its departure; in which sense I naturally took the verses at my first reading them, when I was very young, and before I knew what interpretation the world generally put upon them.

*Animula vagula, blandula,
Hospes comesque corporis,
Quæ nunc abibis in loca?
Pallidula, rigida, nudula,
Nec (ut soles) dabis joca!*

“ Alas, my soul! thou pleasing companion of
“ this body, thou fleeting thing that art now
“ deserting it! whither art thou flying? to
“ what unknown scene? all trembling, fear-
“ ful,

“ful, and pensive! what now is become of
 “thy former wit and humour? thou shalt jest
 “and be gay no more.”

I confess I cannot apprehend where lies the trifling in all this: 'tis the most natural and obvious reflection imaginable to a dying man: and if we consider the Emperor was a heathen, that doubt concerning the future fate of his soul will seem so far from being the effect of want of thought, that 'twas scarce reasonable he should think otherwise; not to mention that here is a plain confession included of his belief in its immortality. The diminutive epithets of *vagula*, *blandula*, and the rest, appear not to me as expressions of levity, but rather of endearment and concern; such as we find in Catullus, and the authors of *Hendeca-syllabi* after him, where they are used to express the utmost love and tenderness for their mistresses.— If you think me right in my notion of the last words of Adrian, be pleas'd to insert it in the Spectator; if not, to suppress it. I am, &c.

ADRIANI morientis Ad ANIMAM,
 TRANSLATED.

Ah fleeting Spirit! wand'ring fire,
 That long hast warm'd my tender breast,
 Must thou no more this frame inspire?
 No more a pleasing, chearful guest?
 S Whither,

Whither, ah whither art thou flying!
 To what dark, undiscover'd shore?
 Thou seem'st all trembling, shiv'ring, dying,
 And Wit and Humour are no more!

L E T T E R V.

Mr. S T E E L E to Mr. P O P E.

Nov. 12, 1712.

I Have read over your Temple of Fame twice,
 and cannot find any thing amiss, of weight
 enough to call a fault, but see in it a thousand
 thousand beauties. Mr. Addison shall see it
 to-morrow: after his perusal of it, I will let
 you know his thoughts. I desire you would
 let me know whether you are at leisure or not?
 I have a design which I shall open a month or
 two hence, with the assistance of the few like
 yourself. If your thoughts are unengaged, I
 shall explain myself further. I am

Your, &c.

L E T T E R VI.

The Answer.

Nov. 16, 1712.

Y O U oblige me by the indulgence you
 have shewn to the poem I sent you, but
 will

will oblige me much more by the kind severity I hope for from you. No errors are so trivial, but they deserve to be mended. But since you say you see nothing that may be call'd a fault, can you but think it so, that I have confin'd the attendance of ^a Guardian spirits to Heaven's favourites only? I could point you to several, but 'tis my business to be informed of those faults I do not know; and as for those I do, not to talk of them, but to correct them. You speak of that poem in a style I neither merit, nor expect; but, I assure you, if you freely mark or dash out, I shall look upon your blots to be its greatest beauties: I mean, if Mr. Addison and yourself should like it in the whole; otherwise the trouble of correction is what I would not take, for I was really so diffident of it as to let it lie by me these ^b two years, just as you now see it. I am afraid of nothing so much as to impose any thing on the world which is unworthy of its acceptance.

As to the last period of your letter, I shall be very ready and glad to contribute to any design that tends to the advantage of mankind, which, I am sure, all yours do. I wish I had

^a This is not now to be found in the *Temple of Fame*, which was the Poem here spoken of.

P.

^b Hence it appears this Poem was writ before the Author was twenty-two years old.

P.

but as much capacity as leisure, for I am perfectly idle: (a sign I have not much capacity.)

If you will entertain the best opinion of me, be pleas'd to think me your friend. Assure Mr. Addison of my most faithful service, of every one's esteem he must be assur'd already. I am

Your, &c.

L E T T E R V I I.

To Mr. S T E E L E.

Nov. 29, 1712.

I Am sorry you published that notion about Adrian's verses as mine: had I imagined you would use my name, I should have express'd my sentiments with more modesty and diffidence. I only sent it to have your opinion, and not to publish my own, which I distrust- ed. But, I think the supposition you draw from the notion of Adrian's being addicted to magic, is a little uncharitable, ("that he might " fear no sort of deity, good or bad") since in the third verse he plainly testifies his apprehension of a future state, by being solicitous whither his soul was going. As to what you mention of his

his using gay and ludicrous expressions, I have own'd my opinion to be, that the expressions are not so, but that diminutives are as often, in the Latin tongue, used as marks of tenderness and concern.

Anima is no more than my soul, *animula* has the force of my dear soul. To say *virgo bella* is not half so endearing as *virguncula bellula*; and had Augustus only call'd Horace *lepidum hominem*, it had amounted to no more than that he thought him a pleasant fellow: 'twas the *bo-munciolum* that express'd the love and tenderness that great Emperor had for him. And perhaps I should myself be much better pleas'd, if I were told you call'd me your little friend, than if you complimented me with the title of a great genius, or an eminent hand, as Jacob does all his authors. I am your, &c.

L E T T E R VIII.

From Mr. STEELE.

Dec. 4. 1712.

THIS is to desire of you that you would please to make an Ode as of a chearful dying spirit, that is to say, the Emperor Adrian's *Animula vagula* put into two or three stanza's

for music. If you comply with this, and send me word so, you will very particularly oblige your, &c.

L E T T E R IX.

I Do not send you word I will do, but have already done the thing you desire of me. You have it (as Cowley calls it) just warm from the brain. It came to me the first moment I waked this morning: Yet, you'll see, it was not so absolutely inspiration, but that I had in my head not only the verses of Adrian, but the fine fragment of Sappho, &c.

The dying Christian to his S O U L,

O D E.

I.

Vital spark of heav'nly flame!
 Quit, oh quit this mortal frame;
 Trembling, hoping, ling'ring, flying,
 Oh the pain, the bliss of dying!
 Cease, fond Nature, cease thy strife,
 And let me languish into life.

II. Hark!

II.

Hark! they whisper; Angels say,
Sister Spirit, come away!
What is this absorbs me quite,
Steals my senses, shuts my sight,
Drowns my spirits, draws my breath?
Tell me, my soul, can this be Death?

III.

The world recedes; it disappears!
Heav'n opens on my eyes! my ears
With sounds seraphic ring:
Lend, lend your wings! I mount! I fly!
O Grave! where is thy Victory?
O Death! where is thy Sting?

LETTER X.

TO MR. ADDISON.

July 20, 1713.

I Am more joy'd at your return than I should
be at that of the sun, so much as I wish for
him this melancholy wet season; but 'tis his fate
too, like yours, to be displeasing to Owls and
obscene animals, who cannot bear his lustre.
What put me in mind of these night-birds was

John Dennis, whom, I think, you are best revenged upon, as the Sun was in the fable upon those bats and beastly birds above-mentioned, only by *shining on*. I am so far from esteeming it any misfortune, that I congratulate you upon having your share in that, which all the great men and all the good men that ever lived have had their part of, Envy and Calumny. To be uncensured and to be obscure, is the same thing. You may conclude from what I here say, that 'twas never in my thoughts to have offered you my pen in any direct reply to such a Critic, but only in some little raillery; not in defence of you, but in contempt of him^a. But indeed your opinion, that 'tis intirely to be neglected, would have been my own had it been my own case; but I felt more warmth here than I did when first I saw his book against myself, (tho' indeed in two minutes it made me heartily merry.) He has written against every thing the world has approv'd these many years. I apprehend but one danger from Dennis's disliking our sense, that it may make us think so very well of it, as to become proud and conceited, upon his disapprobation.

I must not here omit to do justice to Mr.

^a This relates to the Paper occasion'd by Dennis's Remarks upon Cato, call'd,

Dr. Norris's *Narrative of the Frenzy of John Dennis.*

P.

Gay,

FROM MR. ADDISON. 265

Gay, whose zeal in your concern is worthy a friend and honourer of you. He writ to me in the most pressing terms about it, though with that just contempt of the Critic that he deserves. I think in these days one honest man is obliged to acquaint another who are his friends; when so many mischievous insects are daily at work to make people of merit suspicious of each other; that they may have the satisfaction of seeing them look'd upon no better than themselves. I am,

Your, &c.

LETTER XI.

MR. ADDISON TO MR. POPE.

Oct. 26, 1713.

I Was extremely glad to receive a letter from you, but more so upon reading the contents of it. The ^a Work you mention, will I dare say, very sufficiently recommend itself when your name appears with the Proposals: And if you think I can any way contribute to the forwarding of them, you cannot lay a greater obligation upon me than by employing me in such an office. As I have an ambition of having it known that you are my friend, I shall be

^a The Translation of the Iliad. P.

very

very proud of showing it by this, or any other instance. I question not but your Translation will enrich our Tongue and do honour to our Country; for I conclude of it already from those performances with which you have oblig'd the public. I would only have you consider how it may most turn to your advantage. Excuse my impertinence in this particular, which proceeds from my zeal for your ease and happiness. The work would cost you a great deal of Time, and, unless you undertake it, will, I am afraid, never be executed by any other; at least I know none of this age that is equal to it besides yourself.

I am at present wholly immersed in country business, and begin to take delight in it. I wish I might hope to see you here some time, and will not despair of it, when you engage in a work that will require solitude and retirement. I am

Your, &c.

L E T T E R XII.

Mr. ADDISON to Mr. POPE.

Nov. 2, 1713.

I Have receiv'd your letter, and am glad to find that you have laid so good a scheme for your great undertaking. I question not but
the

FROM MR. ADDISON. 267

the Prose^a will require as much care as the Poetry, but the variety will give yourself some relief, and more pleasure to your readers.

You gave me leave once to take the liberty of a friend, in advising you not to content yourself with one half of the Nation for your admirers when you might command them all. If I might take the freedom to repeat it, I would on this occasion. I think you are very happy that you are out of the Fray, and I hope all your undertakings will turn to the better account for it.

You see how I presume on your friendship in taking all this freedom with you: But I already fancy that we have lived many years together in an unreserved conversation, and that we may do so many more, is the sincere wish of
Your, &c.

L E T T E R XIII.

To Mr. ADDISON.

YOUR last is the more obliging, as it hints at some little niceties in my conduct, which your candour and affection prompts you to recommend to me, and which (so tri-

^a The notes to his translation of Homer.

vial

vial as things of this nature seem) are yet of no slight consequence, to people whom every body talks of and every body as he pleases. 'Tis a sort of Tax that attends an estate in Parnassus, which is often rated much higher than in proportion to the small possession an author holds. For indeed an author, who is once come upon the town, is enjoy'd without being thanked for the pleasure, and sometimes ill-treated by those very persons who first debauched him. Yet, to tell you the bottom of my heart, I am no way displeas'd that I have offended the violent of all parties already; and at the same time I assure you conscientiously, I feel not the least malevolence or resentment against any of those who misrepresent me, or are dissatisfied with me. This frame of mind is so easy, that I am perfectly content with my condition.

As I hope, and would flatter myself, that you know me and my thoughts so entirely as never to be mistaken in either, so 'tis a pleasure to me that you guess'd so right in regard to the author of that Guardian you mentioned. But I am sorry to find it has taken air, that I have some hand in those papers, because I write so very few as neither to deserve the credit of such a report with some people, nor the disrepute of it with others. An honest Jacobite
spoke

spoke to me the sense or nonsense of the weak part of his party very fairly, that the good people took it ill of me, that I writ with Steele, tho' upon never so indifferent subjects. This, I know, you will laugh at as well as I do; yet I doubt not but many little calumniators and persons of sour dispositions will take occasion hence to bespatter me. I confess I scorn narrow souls, of all parties, and if I renounce my reason in religious matters, I'll hardly do it in any other.

I can't imagine whence it comes to pass that the few Guardians I have written are so generally known for mine: that in particular which you mention I never discovered to any man but the publisher, till very lately: yet almost every body told me of it.

As to his taking a more Politic turn, I cannot any way enter into that secret, nor have I been let into it, any more than into the rest of his politics. Tho' 'tis said, he will take into these papers also several subjects of the politer kind, as before: But, I assure you, as to myself, I have quite done with them for the future. The little I have done, and the great respect I bear Mr. Steele as a man of wit, has rendered me a suspected Whig to some of the violent; but (as old Dryden said before me) 'tis not the violent I design to please.

I gene-

I generally employ the mornings in painting with Mr. Jervas^a, and the evenings in the conversation of such as I think can most improve my mind, of whatever denomination they are. I ever must set the highest value upon men of truly great, that is honest principles, with equal capacities. The best way I know of overcoming calumny and misconstruction, is by a vigorous perseverance in every thing we know to be right, and a total neglect of all that can ensue from it. 'Tis partly from this maxim that I depend upon your friendship, because I believe it will do justice to my intention in every thing; and give me leave to tell you, that (as the world goes) this is no small assurance I repose in you. I am
Your, &c.

L E T T E R XIV.

T O M R. A D D I S O N.

Dec. 14, 1713.

I Have been lying in wait for my own imagination, this week and more, and watching what thoughts came up in the whirl of the fancy, that were worth communicating to you in a letter. But I am at length convinced that

^a See the Epistle to him in verse, writ about this time. P.
my

my rambling head can produce nothing of that sort; so I must e'en be contented with telling you the old story, that I love you heartily. I have often found by experience, that nature and truth, tho' never so low or vulgar, are yet pleasing when openly and artlessly represented: It would be diverting to me to read the very letters of an infant, could it write its innocent inconsistencies and tautologies just as it thought them. This makes me hope a letter from me will not be unwelcome to you, when I am conscious I write with more unreservedness than ever man wrote, or perhaps talk'd to another. I trust your good-nature with the whole range of my follies, and really love you so well, that I would rather you should pardon me than esteem me; since one is an act of goodness and benevolence, the other a kind of constrained deference.

You can't wonder my thoughts are scarce consistent, when I tell you how they are distracted. Every hour of my life my mind is strangely divided; this minute perhaps I am above the stars, with a thousand systems round about me, looking forward into a vast abyss, and losing my whole comprehension in the boundless space of Creation, in dialogues with Whiston and the Astronomers; the next moment I am below all trifles groveling with T*

in the very centre of nonsense: Now I am recreated with the brisk fallies and quick turns of wit, which Mr. Steele in his liveliest and freest humours darts about him; and now levelling my application to the insignificant observations and quirks of Grammar of C* and D*.

Good God! what an incongruous animal is man! how unsettled in his best part, his soul; and how changing and variable in his frame of body? the constancy of the one shook by every notion, the temperament of the other affected by every blast of wind! What is he altogether but one mighty inconsistency; sickness and pain is the lot of one half of him: doubt and fear the portion of the other! What a bustle we make about passing our time, when all our space is but a point? what aims and ambitions are crowded into this little instant of our life, which (as Shakespear finely words it) is rounded with a sleep? Our whole extent of being is no more, in the eye of him who gave it, than a scarce perceptible moment of duration. Those animals whose circle of living is limited to three or four hours, as the naturalists tell us, are yet as long-lived and possess as wide a scene of action as man, if we consider him with a view to all Space, and all Eternity. Who knows what plots, what achievements a mite

mite may perform in his kingdom of a grain of dust, within his life of some minutes; and of how much less consideration than even this, is the life of man in the sight of God, who is from ever, and for ever?

Who that thinks in this train, but must see the world and its contemptible grandeurs, lessen before him at every thought? 'Tis enough to make one remain stupify'd in a poize of inaction, void of all desires, of all designs, of all friendships.

But we must return (thro' our very condition of being) to our narrow selves, and those things that affect ourselves: our passions, our interests flow in upon us, and unphilosophize us into mere mortals. For my part, I never return so much into myself, as when I think of you, whose friendship is one of the best comforts I have for the insignificancy of myself. I am

Your, &c.

LETTER XV.

To Mr. ADDISON.

Jan. 30, 1713-14.

YOUR letter found me very busy in my grand undertaking, to which I must wholly

T ly

ly give myself up for some time, unless when I snatch an hour to please myself with a distant conversation with you and a few others, by writing. 'Tis no comfortable prospect to be reflecting, that so long a siege as that of Troy lies upon my hands, and the campagne above half over, before I have made any progress. Indeed the Greek fortification upon a nearer approach does not appear so formidable as it did, and I am almost apt to flatter myself, that Homer secretly seems inclined to a correspondence with me, in letting me into a good part of his intentions. There are, indeed, a sort of underling auxiliars to the difficulty of a work, call'd Commentators and Critics, who would frighten many people by their number and bulk, and perplex our progress under pretence of fortifying their author. These lie very low in the trenches and ditches they themselves have digged, encompassed with dirt of their own heaping up; but, I think, there may be found a method of coming at the main works by a more speedy and gallant way than by mining under ground, that is, by using the poetical engines, wings, and flying over their heads^a.

^a There is a strange confusion in this long continued metaphor: sometimes the *fortifications* spoken of are to

keep the ignorant out, sometimes to let them in, and sometimes only to quibble with, as in the words [*un-*

While

While I am engaged in the fight, I find you are concerned how I shall be paid, and are solicitous that I may not have the ill fate of many discarded Generals, to be first envied and malign'd, then perhaps prais'd, and lastly neglected. The former (the constant attendant upon all great and laudable enterprizes) I have already experienced. Some have said I am not a master in the Greek, who either are so themselves or are not: if they are not, they can't tell; and if they are, they can't without having catechiz'd me. But if they can read (for, I know, some critics can, and others cannot) there are fairly lying before them some specimens of my translation from this Author in the Miscellanies, which they are heartily welcome to. I have met with as much malignity another way, some calling me a Tory, because the heads of that party have been distinguishingly favourable to me; some a Whig, because I have been favoured with yours, Mr. Congreve's, and Mr. Craggs's friendship, and of late with my lord Hallifax's patronage. How much more natural a conclusion might be formed, by any good-natured man, that a person who has been well used by all sides, has

*der pretence of fortifying their
author.]* But it is no matter.
The Critics and Commenta-

tors are to be abused, and
any thing serves to do that.

been offensive to none. This miserable age is so sunk between animosities of Party and those of Religion, that I begin to fear, most men have Politics enough to make (thro' violence) the best scheme of government a bad one: and Belief enough to hinder their own salvation. I hope for my own part never to have more of either than is consistent with common Justice and Charity, and always as much as becomes a Christian and honest man. Tho' I find it an unfortunate thing to be bred a Papist here, where one is obnoxious to four parts in five as being so too much or too little; I shall yet be easy under both their mistakes, and be what I more than seem to be, for I suffer for it. God is my witness that I no more envy you Protestants your places and possessions, than I do our Priests, their charity or learning. I am ambitious of nothing but the good opinion of good men, on both sides; for I know that one virtue of a free spirit is worth more than all the virtues put together of all the narrow-soul'd people in the world. I am

Your, &c.

L E T T E R

LETTER XVI.

TO MR. ADDISON.

OCT. 10, 1714.

I Have been acquainted by ^a one of my friends, who omits no opportunities of gratifying me, that you have lately been pleas'd to speak of me in a manner which nothing but the real respect I have for you can deserve. May I hope that some late malevolencies have lost their effect? indeed it is neither for me, nor my enemies, to pretend to tell you whether I am your friend or not; but if you would judge by probabilities, I beg to know which of your poetical acquaintance has so little interest in pretending to be so? Methinks no man should question the real friendship of one who desires no real service. I am only to get as much from the Whigs, as I got from the Tories, that is to say, Civility; being neither so proud as to be insensible of any good office, nor so humble, as not to dare heartily to despise any man who does me an injustice.

I will not value myself upon having ever guarded all the degrees of respect for you: for

^a See two Letters, from Mr. Jervas, and the Answer to it. N^o 22, 23. P.

(to say the truth) all the world speaks well of you, and I should be under a necessity of doing the same, whether I car'd for you or not.

As to what you have said of me, I shall never believe that the author of Cato can speak one thing and think another. As a proof that I account you sincere, I beg a favour of you: It is, that you would look over the two first books of my translation of Homer, which are in the hands of my Lord Halifax. I am sensible how much the reputation of any poetical work will depend upon the character you give it: 'tis therefore some evidence of the trust I repose in your good-will, when I give you this opportunity of speaking ill of me with justice; and yet expect you will tell me your truest thoughts, at the same time that you tell others your most favourable ones.

I have a farther request, which I must press with earnestness. My bookseller is reprinting the Essay on Criticism, to which you have done too much honour in your Spectator of N^o 253. The period in that paper, where you say, "I have admitted some strokes of ill-nature into that Essay," is the only one I could wish omitted of all you have written; but I would not desire it should be so, unless I had the merit of removing your objection. I beg you but

to

FROM SEVERAL PERSONS. 279

to point out those strokes to me, and, you may be assured, they shall be treated without mercy.

Since we are upon proofs of sincerity (which I am pretty confident will turn to the advantage of us both in each other's opinion) give me leave to name another passage in the same Spectator, which I wish you would alter. It is where you mention an observation upon Homer's Verses of Sisyphus's Stone, as^a never having been made before by any of the Critics: I happened to find the same in Dionysius of Halicarnassus's Treatise, *Περὶ σωθέσεως ὀνομάτων*, who treats very largely upon these verses. I know you will think fit to soften your expression, when you see the passage; which you must needs have read, though it be since slipt out of your memory. I am, with the utmost esteem,

Your, &c.

L E T T E R XVII.

To the Honourable —

June 8, 1714.

THE question you ask in relation to Mr. Addison and Philips, I shall answer in a

^a These words are since left out in Mr. Tickel's Edition, but were extant in all during Mr. Addison's life. P.

few words. Mr. Philips did express himself with much indignation against me one evening at Button's Coffee-house (as I was told) saying, that I was enter'd into a cabal with Dean Swift and others to write against the Whig-Interest, and in particular to undermine his own reputation, and that of his friends Steele and Addison: but Mr. Philips never opened his lips to my face, on this or any like occasion, tho' I was almost every night in the same room with him, nor ever offer'd me any indecorum. Mr. Addison came to me a night or two after Philips had talk'd in this idle manner, and assur'd me of his disbelief of what had been said, of the friendship we should always maintain, and desir'd I would say nothing further of it. My Lord Hallifax did me the honour to stir in this matter, by speaking to several people to obviate a false aspersion, which might have done me no small prejudice with one party. However Philips did all he could secretly to continue the report with the Hanover Club, and kept in his hands the subscriptions paid for me to him, as Secretary to that Club. The heads of it have since given him to understand, that they take it ill; but (upon the terms I ought to be with such a man) I would not ask him for this money, but commission'd one of the Players, his equals, to receive it. This is the whole

whole matter ; but as to the secret grounds ^a of this malignity, they will make a very pleasant history when we meet. Mr. Congreve and some others have been much diverted with it, and most of the gentlemen of the Hanover Club have made it the subject of their ridicule on their Secretary. It is to this management of Phillips, that the world owes Mr. Gay's Pastorals. The ingenious author is extremely your servant, and would have comply'd with your kind invitation, but that he is just now appointed Secretary to my Lord Clarendon, in his embassy to Hanover.

I am sensible of the zeal and friendship with which, I am sure, you will always defend your friend in his absence, from all those little tales and calumnies, which a man of any genius or merit is born to. I shall never complain while I am happy in such noble defenders, and in such contemptible opponents. May their envy and ill-nature ever increase, to the glory and pleasure of those they would injure ; may they represent me what they will, as long as you think me, what I am,

Your, &c.

^a They were Mr. Pope's writing the ironical comparison between his and Phillips's Pastorals, in the Guardian.

L E T T E R X V I I I .

July 13, 1714.

YOU mention the account I gave you some time ago of the things which Philips said in his foolishness : but I can't tell from any thing in your letter, whether you received a long one from me about a fortnight since. It was principally intended to thank you for the last obliging favour you did me ; and perhaps for that reason you pass it in silence. I there launch'd into some account of my temporal affairs, and intend now to give you some hints of my spiritual. The conclusion of your letter draws this upon you, where you tell me, you prayed for me. Your proceeding, Sir, is contrary to that of most other friends, who never talk of praying for a man after they have done him a service, but only when they will do him none. Nothing can be more kind than the hint you give me of the vanity of human sciences, which, I assure you, I am daily more convinced of ; and indeed I have, for some years past, look'd upon all of them no better than amusements. To make them the ultimate end of our pursuit, is a miserable and short ambition, which will drop from us at every little disappointment here, and even, in case of no
disap-

disappointments here, will infallibly desert us hereafter. The utmost fame they are capable of bestowing, is never worth the pains they cost us, and the time they lose us. If you attain the top of your desires that way, all those who envy you will do you harm; and of those who admire you, few will do you good. The unsuccessful writers are your declared enemies, and probably the successful your secret ones: for those hate not more to be excell'd, than these to be rival'd: And at the upshot, after a life of perpetual application, you reflect that you have been doing nothing for yourself, and that the same or less industry might have gain'd you a friendship that can never deceive or end, a satisfaction, which praise cannot bestow nor vanity feel, and a glory, which (tho' in one respect like fame, not to be had till after death) yet shall be felt and enjoy'd to eternity. These, dear Sir, are unfeignedly my sentiments, whenever I think at all: for half the things that employ our heads deserve not the name of thoughts, they are only stronger dreams of impressions upon the imagination: our schemes of government, our systems of philosophy, our golden worlds of poetry, are all but so many shadowy images, and airy prospects, which arise to us but so much the livelier and more frequent, as

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we

we are more overcast with the darkness, and disturbed with the fumes, of human vanity.

The same thing that makes old men willing to leave this world, makes me willing to leave poetry, long habit, and weariness of the same track. Homer will work a cure upon me; fifteen thousand verses are equivalent to fourscore years, to make one old in rhyme: and I should be sorry and ashamed, to go on jingling to the last step, like a waggoner's horse, in the same road, and so leave my bells to the next silly animal that will be proud of them. That man makes a mean figure in the eyes of Reason, who is measuring syllables and coupling rhymes, when he should be mending his own soul, and securing his own immortality. If I had not this opinion, I should be unworthy even of those small and limited parts which God has given me; and unworthy of the friendship of such a man as you. I am

Your, &c.

L E T T E R XIX.

July 25, 1714.

I Have no better excuse to offer you, that I have omitted a task naturally so pleasing to me as conversing upon paper with you, but that

that my time and eyes have been wholly employ'd upon Homer, whom, I almost fear, I shall find but one way of imitating, which is, in his blindness. I am perpetually afflicted with head-achs, that very much affect my sight, and indeed since my coming hither I have scarce past an hour agreeably, except that in which I read your letter. I would seriously have you think, you have no man who more truly knows to place a right value on your friendship, than he who least deserves it on all other accounts than his due sense of it. But, let me tell you, you can hardly guess what a task you undertake, when you profess yourself my friend; there are some Tories who will take you for a Whig, some Whigs who will take you for a Tory, some Protestants who will esteem you a rank Papist, and some Papists who will account you a Heretic.

I find by dear experience, we live in an age, where it is criminal to be moderate; and where no one man can be allowed to be just to all men. The notions of right and wrong are so far strain'd, that perhaps to be in the right so very violently, may be of worse consequence than to be easily and quietly in the wrong. I really wish all men so well, that, I am satisfied, but few can wish me so; but if those few are such as tell me they do, I am content, for they are
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the best people I know. While you believe me what I profess as to religion, I can bear any thing the bigotted may say; while Mr. Congreve likes my poetry, I can endure Dennis, and a thousand more like him; while the most honest and moral of each party think me no ill man, I can easily bear that the most violent and mad of all parties rise up to throw dirt at me.

I must expect an hundred attacks upon the publication of my Homer. Whoever in our times would be a professor of learning above his fellows, ought at the very first to enter the world with the constancy and resolution of a primitive Christian, and be prepared to suffer all sort of public persecution. It is certainly to be lamented, that if any man does but endeavour to distinguish himself, or gratify others by his studies, he is immediately treated as a common enemy, instead of being looked upon as a common friend; and assaulted as generally as if his whole design were to prejudice the State or ruin the Public. I will venture to say, no man ever rose to any degree of perfection in writing, but thro' obstinacy, and an inveterate resolution against the stream of mankind: So that if the world has received any benefit from the labours of the learned, it was in its own despite. For when first they essay their parts,
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all people in general are prejudiced against new beginners; and when they have got a little above contempt, then some particular persons, who were before unfortunate in their own attempts, are sworn foes to them only because they succeed.—Upon the whole, one may say of the best writers, that they pay a severe fine for their fame, which it is always in the power of the most worthless part of mankind to levy upon them when they please.

I am, &c.

LETTER XX.

TO MR. JERVAS.

July 28, 1714.

I Am just enter'd upon the old way of life again, sleep and musing. It is my employment to revive the old of past ages to the present, as it is yours to transmit the young of the present, to the future. I am copying the great Master in one art, with the same love and diligence with which the Painters hereafter will copy you in another.

Thus I should begin my Epistle to you, if it were a Dedicatory one. But as it is a friendly letter, you are to find nothing mention'd in
your

your own praise but what one only in the world is witness to, your particular good-natur'd offices to me.

I am cut out from any thing but common acknowledgments, or common discourse: The first you would take ill, though I told but half what I ought: so in short the last only remains.

And as for the last, what can you expect from a man who has not talk'd these five days? who is withdrawing his thoughts as far as he can, from all the present world, its customs, and its manners, to be fully possess'd and absorpt in the past? When people talk of going to Church, I think of sacrifices and libations; when I see the parson, I address him as Chryses priest of Apollo; and instead of the Lord's prayer, I begin,

God of the silver Bow, &c.

While you in the world are concerned about the Protestant Succession, I consider only how Menelaus may recover Helen, and the Trojan war be put to a speedy conclusion. I never inquire if the Queen be well or not, but heartily wish to be at Hector's funeral. The only things I regard in this life, are whether my friends are well? whether my Translation go well on? whether Dennis be writing criticisms?

cisms? whether any body will answer him, since I don't? and whether Lintot be not yet broke?

I am, &c.

L E T T E R XXI.

To the same.

Aug. 16, 1714.

I Thank you for your good offices, which are numberless. Homer advances so fast, that he begins to look about for the ornaments he is to appear in, like a modish modern author,

*Picture in the front,
With bays and wicked rhyme upon't.*

I have the greatest proof in nature at present of the amusing power of Poetry, for it takes me up so entirely, that I scarce see what passes under my nose, and hear nothing that is said about me. To follow poetry as one ought, one must forget father and mother, and cleave to it alone. My Rêverie has been so deep, that I have scarce had an interval to think myself uneasy in the want of your company. I now and then just miss you as I step into bed; this minute indeed I want extremely to see

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you,

you, the next I shall dream of nothing but the taking of Troy, or the recovery of Briseis.

I fancy no friendship is so likely to prove lasting as ours, because, I am pretty sure, there never was a friendship of so easy a nature. We neither of us demand any mighty things from each other; what Vanity we have expects its gratification from other people. It is not I, that am to tell you what an Artist you are, nor is it you that are to tell me what a Poet I am; but 'tis from the world abroad we hope, (piously hope) to hear these things. At home we follow our business, when we have any; and think and talk most of each other when we have none. 'Tis not unlike the happy friendship of a stay'd man and his wife, who are seldom so fond as to hinder the business of the house from going on all day, or so indolent as not to find consolation in each other every evening. Thus well-meaning couples hold in amity to the last, by not expecting too much from human nature; while romantic friendships, like violent loves, begin with disquiets, proceed to jealousies, and conclude in animosities. I have lived to see the fierce advancement, the sudden turn, and the abrupt period, of three or four of these enormous friendships, and am perfectly convinced of the truth of a maxim we once agreed in, that nothing hinders
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the constant agreement of people who live together, but merely vanity; a secret insisting upon what they think their dignity of merit, and an inward expectation of such an Overmeasure of deference and regard, as answers to their own extravagant false scale; and which no body can pay, because none but themselves can tell, exactly, to what pitch it amounts.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXII.

Mr. JERVAS to Mr. POPE.

Aug. 20, 1714.

I Have a particular to tell you at this time, which pleases me so much, that you must expect a more than ordinary alacrity in every turn. You know I could keep you in suspense for twenty lines, but I will tell you directly, that Mr. Addison and I have had a conversation, that it would have been worth your while to have been placed behind the wainscot, or behind some half-length picture, to have heard. He assur'd me, that he would make use not only of his interest, but of his art to do you some service; he did not mean his art of poetry, but his art at Court; and he is sensible

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that

that nothing can have a better air for himself than moving in your favour, especially since insinuations were spread, that he did not care you should prosper too much as a poet. He protests that it shall not be his fault, if there is not the best intelligence in the world, and the most hearty friendship, &c. He owns, he was afraid Dr. Swift might have carried you too far among the enemy, during the heat of the animosity; but now all is safe, and you are escap'd even in his opinion. I promis'd in your name, like a good Godfather, not that you should renounce the devil and all his works, but that you would be delighted to find him your friend merely for his own sake; therefore prepare yourself for some civilities.

I have done Homer's head, shadow'd and heighten'd carefully; and I inclose the out-line of the same size, that you may determine whether you would have it so large, or reduced to make room for feuillage or laurel round the oval, or about the square of the Busto? perhaps there is something more solemn in the image itself, if I can get it well perform'd.

If I have been instrumental in bringing you and Mr. Addison together with all sincerity, I value myself upon it as an acceptable piece of service to such a one as I know you to be.

Your, &c.

L E T T E R

LETTER XXIII.

Mr. POPE'S Answer.

Aug. 27, 1714.

I Am just arrived from Oxford, very well diverted and entertain'd there. Every one is much concern'd for the Queen's death. No panegyrics ready yet for the King.

I admire your whig-principles of resistance exceedingly, in the spirit of the Barcelonians: I join in your wish for them. Mr. Addison's verses on Liberty, in his letter from Italy, would be a good form of prayer in my opinion, *O Liberty! thou Goddess heavenly bright! &c.*

What you mention of the friendly office you endeavour'd to do betwixt Mr. Addison and me, deserves acknowledgments on my part. You thoroughly know my regard to his character, and my propensity to testify it by all ways in my power. You as thoroughly know the scandalous meanness of that proceeding which was used by Philips, to make a man I so highly value, suspect my dispositions toward him. But as, after all, Mr. Addison must be the judge in what regards himself, and has seem'd to be no very just one to me; so, I must own to you, I expect nothing but civility from

him, how much soever I wish for his friendship. As for any offices of real kindness or service which it is in his power to do me, I should be ashamed to receive them from any man who had no better opinion of my Morals, than to think me a Party-man: nor of my Temper, than to believe me capable of maligning, or envying another's reputation as a poet. So I leave it to time to convince him as to both, to shew him the shallow depths of those half-witted creatures who mis-inform'd him, and to prove that I am incapable of endeavouring to lessen a person whom I would be proud to imitate, and therefore ashamed to flatter. In a word, Mr. Addison is sure of my respect at all times, and of my real friendship whenever he shall think fit to know me for what I am.

For all that pass'd betwixt Dr. Swift and me, you know the whole (without reserve) of our correspondence. The engagements I had to him were such as the actual services he had done me, in relation to the subscription for Homer, obliged me to. I must have leave to be grateful to him, and to any one who serves me, let him be never so obnoxious to any party: nor did the Tory-party ever put me to the hardship of asking this leave, which is the greatest obligation I owe to it; and I expect no greater from the Whig-party than the same liberty.

berly—A curse on the word Party, which I have been forc'd to use so often in this period! I wish the present reign may put an end to the distinction, that there may be no other for the future than that of Honest and Knave, Fool and Man of sense; these two sorts must always be enemies; but for the rest, may all people do as you and I, believe what they please, and be friends.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R XXIV.

To the Earl of HALLIFAX^a.

My LORD,

Dec. 1, 1714.

I Am obliged to you both for the favours you have done me, and for those you intend me. I distrust neither your will nor your memory, when it is to do good: and if ever I become troublesome or solicitous, it must not be out of expectation, but out of gratitude. Your Lordship may either cause me to live agreeably in the town, or contentedly in the country, which is really all the difference I set between an easy fortune and a small one. It is indeed a high

^a See the note on *v* 116. of his *Imit.* of the first *Satire*, Book ii. of Horace.

strain of generosity in you, to think of making me easy all my life, only because I have been so happy as to divert you some few hours: but if I may have leave to add, it is because you think me no enemy to my native country, there will appear a better reason; for I must of consequence be very much (as I sincerely am)

Yours, &c.

^a L E T T E R XXV.

Dr. PARNELLE to Mr. POPE.

I Am writing you a long letter, but all the tediousness I feel in it is, that it makes me during the time think more intently of my being far from you. I fancy, if I were with you, I could remove some of the uneasiness which you may have felt from the opposition of the world, and which you should be ashamed to feel, since it is but the testimony which one part of it gives you that your merit is unquestionable. What would you have otherwise, from ignorance, envy, or those tempers which vie with you in your own way? I know this in mankind, that when our ambition is unable to

^a This, and the three Extracts following, concerning the Translation of the first

Iliad, set on foot by Mr. Addison, Mr. Pope has omitted in his first Edition. P.

attain

attain its end, it is not only wearied, but exasperated too at the vanity of its labours; then we speak ill of happier studies, and sighing condemn the excellence which we find above our reach.—

My ^b Zoilus, which you us'd to write about, I finish'd last spring, and left in town. I waited till I came up to send it you, but not arriving here before your book was out, imagin'd it a lost piece of labour. If you will still have it, you need only write me word.

I have here seen the First Book of Homer ^c, which came out at a time when it could not but appear as a kind of setting up against you. My opinion is, that you may, if you please, give them thanks who writ it. Neither the numbers nor the spirit have an equal mastery with yours; but what surprizes me more is, that, a scholar being concerned, there should happen to be some mistakes in the author's sense; such as putting the light of Pallas's eyes into the eyes of Achilles, making the taunt of Achilles to Agamemnon (that he should have spoils when Troy should be taken) to be a cool and serious proposal; the translating what you

^b Printed for B. Lintot, 1715. 8°, and afterwards added to the last edition of his poems.

^c Written by Mr. Addison, and published in the name of Mr. Tickell.

call *Ablution* by the word *offals*, and so leaving Water out of the rite of lustration, &c. but you must have taken notice of all this before. I write not to inform you, but to shew I always have you at heart.

I am, &c.

Extract from a LETTER of the Rev.
Dr. BERKLEY, Dean of London-derry.

July 7, 1715.

— Some days ago, three or four gentlemen and myself, exerting that right which all readers pretend to over authors, fate in judgment upon the two new Translations of the first Iliad. Without partiality to my country-men, I assure you, they all gave the preference where it was due; being unanimously of opinion, that yours was equally just to the sense with Mr. —'s, and without comparison more easy, more poetical, and more sublime. But I will say no more on such a thread-bare subject, as your late performance is at this time.

I am, &c.

Extract

Extract from a LETTER of
Mr. GAY to Mr. POPE.

July 8, 1715.

— I have just set down Sir Samuel Garth at the Opera. He bid me tell you, that every body is pleas'd with your translation, but a few at Button's; and that Sir Richard Steele told him, that Mr. Addison said the other translation was the best that ever was in any language^a. He treated me with extreme civility, and out of kindness gave me a squeeze by the fore finger. — I am inform'd that at Button's your character is made very free with as to Morals, &c. and Mr. Addison says, that your translation and Tickel's are both very well done, but that the latter has more of Homer.

I am, &c.

^a Sir Richard Steele afterwards, in his Preface to an Edition of the Drummer, a Comedy by Mr. Addison, | shews it to be his opinion, that "Mr. Addison himself" "was the person who translated this book." P.

Extract from a LETTER of
Dr. ARBUTHNOT to Mr. POPE.

July 9, 1715.

— I congratulate you upon Mr. T*'s first book. It does not indeed want its merit; but I was strangely disappointed in my expectation of a translation nicely true to the Original; whereas in those parts where the greatest exactness seems to be demanded, he has been the least careful, I mean the history of ancient ceremonies and rites, &c. in which you have with great judgment been exact.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R XXVI.

Mr. POPE to the Honourable JAMES
CRAGGS, Esq.

July 15, 1715.

I Lay hold of the opportunity given me by my Lord Duke of Shrewsbury, to assure you of the continuance of that esteem and affection I have long born you, and the memory of so many agreeable conversations as we have pass'd together. I wish it were a compliment to say,
I such

such conversations as are not to be found on this side of the water: for the Spirit of diffension is gone forth among us: nor is it a wonder that Button's is no longer Button's, when old England is no longer old England, that region of hospitality, society, and good humour. Party affects us all, even the wits, tho' they gain as little by politics as they do by their wit. We talk much of fine sense, refin'd sense, and exalted sense; but for use and happiness, give me a little common sense. I say this in regard to some gentlemen, profess'd Wits of our acquaintance, who fancy they can make Poetry of consequence at this time of day, in the midst of this raging fit of Politics. For, they tell me, the busy part of the nation are not more divided about Whig and Tory, than these idle fellows of the feather about Mr. T*'s and my Translation. I (like the Tories) have the town in general, that is the mob, on my side; but it is usual with the smaller party to make up in industry what they want in number, and that is the case with the little Senate of Cato. However, if our principles be well consider'd, I must appear a brave Whig, and Mr. T. a rank Tory: I translated Homer for the public in general, he to gratify the inordinate desires of one man only. We have, it seems, a great Turk in poetry, who can never bear a brother
on

on the throne; and has his mutes too, a set of nodders, winkers, and whisperers, whose business is to strangle all other offsprings of wit in their birth. The new translator of Homer is the humblest slave he has, that is to say, his first Minister; let him receive the honours he gives me, but receive them with fear and trembling; let him be proud of the approbation of his absolute Lord, I appeal to the people, as my rightful judges and masters; and if they are not inclined to condemn me, I fear no arbitrary high-flying proceeding from the small Court-faction at Button's. But after all I have said of this great man, there is no rupture between us. We are each of us so civil and obliging, that neither thinks he is obliged: And I, for my part, treat with him, as we do with the Grand Monarch; who has too many great qualities not to be respected, though we know he watches any occasion to oppress us^a.

When I talk of Homer, I must not forget the early present you made me of Monsieur de la Motte's book: And I can't conclude this letter without telling you a melancholy piece of news, which affects our very entrails, L* is dead, and soupes are no more! You see I write in the old familiar way. "This is not to the

^a We find here most of the sentiments he soon after put into verse on this occasion.

" minister

“minister, but to the friend^b.” However it is some mark of uncommon regard to the minister that I steal an expression from a Secretary of State.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXVII.

To Mr. CONGREVE.

Jan. 16, 1714-15.

MEthinks when I write to you, I am making a confession; I have got (I can't tell how) such a custom of throwing myself out upon paper without reserve. You were not mistaken in what you judged of my temper of mind when I writ last. My faults will not be hid from you, and perhaps it is no dispraise to me that they will not: the cleanness and purity of one's mind is never better proved, than in discovering its own fault at first view; as when a stream shews the dirt at its bottom, it shews also the transparency of the water.

My spleen was not occasioned, however, by any thing an abusive angry critic could write of me. I take very kindly your heroic manner

^b Alluding to St. John's Letter to Prior, published in the *Report of the Secret Committee*.

of congratulation upon this scandal; for I think nothing more honourable, than to be involved in the same fate with all the great and the good that ever lived; that is, to be envied and censured by bad writers.

You do no more than answer my expectations of you, in declaring how well you take my freedom, in sometimes neglecting, as I do, to reply to your letters so soon as I ought. Those who have a right taste of the substantial part of friendship, can wave the ceremonial: a friend is the only one that will bear the omission; and one may find who is not so, by the very trial of it.

As to any anxiety I have concerning the fate of my Homer, the care is over with me: the world must be the judge, and I shall be the first to consent to the justice of its judgment, whatever it be. I am not so arrant an Author as even to desire, that if I am in the wrong, all mankind should be so.

I am mightily pleas'd with a saying of Monsieur Turreil: "When a man writes, he ought
" to animate himself with the thoughts of pleas-
" ing all the world: but he is to renounce that
" desire or hope, the very moment the book
" goes out of his hands."

I write this from Binfield, whither I came yesterday, having pass'd a few days in my way
with

with my Lord Bolingbroke; I go to London in three days time, and will not fail to pay a visit to Mr. M——, whom I saw not long since at my Lord Hallifax's. I hoped from thence he had some hopes of advantage from the present administration: for few people (I think) but I, pay respects to great men without any prospects. I am in the fairest way in the world of being not worth a groat, being born both a Papist and a Poet. This puts me in mind of re-acknowledging your continued endeavours to enrich me. But, I can tell you, 'tis to no purpose, for without the *Opes, æquum mi animum ipse parabo.*

L E T T E R XXVIII.

To Mr. CONGREGVE.

March 19, 1714-15.

THE Farce of the What-d'ye-call-it^a has occasioned many different speculations in the town. Some look'd upon it as a mere jest upon the Tragic poets, others as a satire upon the late War. Mr. Cromwell, hearing none of the words, and seeing the action to be tragical, was much astonish'd to find the audience laugh;

^a Written by Gay.

and says the Prince and Princess must doubtless be under no less amazement on the same account. Several templars and others of the more vociferous kind of critics, went with a resolution to hiss, and confess'd they were forced to laugh so much, that they forgot the design they came with. The Court in general has in a very particular manner come into the jest, and the three first nights (notwithstanding two of them were court-nights) were distinguished by very full audiences of the first Quality. The common people of the pit and gallery received it at first with great gravity and sedateness, some few with tears; but after the third day they also took the hint, and have ever since been very loud in their claps. There are still some sober men who cannot be of the general opinion; but the laughers are so much the majority, that one or two critics seem determined to undeceive the town at their proper cost, by writing grave dissertations against it: to encourage them in which laudable design, it is resolv'd a Preface shall be prefix'd to the Farce, in vindication of the nature and dignity of this new way of writing.

Yesterday Mr. Steele's affair was decided: I am sorry I can be of no other opinion than yours, as to his whole carriage and writings of late. But certainly he has not only been punished by
others,

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others, but suffered much even from his own party in the point of character, nor (I believe) received any amends in that of interest, as yet, whatever may be his prospects for the future.

This Gentleman, among a thousand others, is a great instance of the fate of all who are carried away by party-spirit, of any side. I wish all violence may succeed as ill: but am really amazed that so much of that sour and pernicious quality should be joined with so much natural good humour as, I think, Mr. Steele is possessed of.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R XXIX.

To Mr. CONGREVE.

April 7, 1715.

MR. Pope is going to Mr. Jervas's, where Mr. Addison is sitting for his picture; in the mean time amidst clouds of Tobacco at a coffee-house I write this letter. There is a grand revolution at Will's; Morice has quitted for a coffee-house in the city, and Titcomb is restored, to the great joy of Cromwell, who was at a great loss for a person to converse with upon the fathers and church-history; the

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know-

knowledge I gain from him, is entirely in painting and poetry; and Mr. Pope owes all his skill in astronomy to him and Mr. Whiston, so celebrated of late for his discovery of the longitude in an extraordinary copy of verses^a. Mr. Rowe's Jane Gray is to be play'd in Easter-week, when Mrs. Oldfield is to personate a character directly opposite to female nature; for what woman ever despised Sovereignty? You know Chaucer has a tale where a knight saves his head, by discovering it was the thing which all women most coveted. Mr. Pope's Homer is retarded by the great rains that have fallen of late, which causes the sheets to be long a drying: this gives Mr. Lintot great uneasiness, who is now endeavouring to corrupt the Curate of his parish to pray for fair weather, that his work may go on. There is a six-penny Criticism lately published upon the tragedy of the What-d'ye-call it, wherein he with much judgment and learning calls me a blockhead, and Mr. Pope a knave. His grand charge is against the Pilgrim's Progress being read, which, he says, is directly levell'd at Cato's reading Pláto; to back this censure, he goes on to tell you, that the Pilgrim's Progress being mentioned to be the eighth edition, makes the

^a Call'd, *An Ode on the Longitude*, in Swift and Pope's Miscellanies. P.

reflection evident, the Tragedy of Cato having just eight times (as he quaintly expresses it) visited the press. He has also endeavoured to show, that every particular passage of the play alludes to some fine part of tragedy, which, he says, I have injudiciously and profanely abused^b. Sir Samuel Garth's poem upon my Lord Clare's house, I believe, will be published in the Easter-week.

Thus far Mr. Gay, who has in his letter forestall'd all the subjects of diversion; unless it should be one to you to say, that I sit up till two a clock over Burgundy and Champagne; and am become so much a rake, that I shall be ashamed in a short time to be thought to do any sort of business. I fear I must get the gout by drinking; purely for a fashionable pretence to sit still long enough to translate four books of Homer. I hope you'll by that time be up again, and I may succeed to the bed and couch of my predecessor: pray cause the stuffing to be repaired, and the crutches shorten'd for me. The calamity of your gout is what all your friends, that is to say, all that know you, must share in; we desire you in your turn to condole

^b This curious piece was written by one Griffin a Player, assisted by Lewis Theobald. P.

with us, who are under a persecution, and much afflicted with a distemper which proves mortal to many poets, a Criticism. We have indeed some relieving intervals of laughter (as you know there are in some diseases) and it is the opinion of divers good guessers, that the last fit will not be more violent than advantageous; for poets assail'd by critics, are like men bitten by Tarantula's, they dance on so much the faster.

Mr. Thomas Burnet hath play'd the precursor to the coming of Homer, in a treatise called *Homerides*. He has since risen very much in his criticisms, and, after assaulting Homer, made a daring attack upon the ° What-d'ye-call it. Yet is there not a Proclamation issued for the burning of Homer and the Pope by the common hangman; nor is the What-d'ye-call it yet silenced by the Lord chamberlain.

Your, &c.

L E T T E R X X X .

Mr. C O N G R E V E t o Mr. P O P E .

May 6.

I Have the pleasure of your very kind letter. I have always been obliged to you for your

° In one of his papers called *The Grumbler*. P.

friendship

friendship and concern for me, and am more affected with it, than I will take upon me to express in this letter. I do assure you there is no return wanting on my part, and am very sorry I had not the good luck to see the Dean before I left the town: it is a great pleasure to me, and not a little vanity to think that he misses me. As to my health, which you are so kind to enquire after, it is not worse than in London: I am almost afraid yet to say that it is better, for I cannot reasonably expect much effect from these waters in so short a time; but in the main they seem to agree with me. Here is not one creature that I know, which, next to the few I would chuse, contributes very much to my satisfaction. At the same time that I regret the want of your conversation, I please myself with thinking that you are where you first ought to be, and engaged where you cannot do too much. Pray, give my humble service, and best wishes to your good mother. I am sorry you don't tell me how Mr. Gay does in his health; I should have been glad to have heard he was better. My young Amanuensis, as you call him, I am afraid, will prove but a wooden one: and you know *ex quovis ligno*, &c. You will pardon Mrs. R—'s pedantry, and believe me to be

Your, &c.

P. S. By the inclosed you will see I am like to be impress'd, and enroll'd in the list of Mr. Curll's Authors; but, I thank God! I shall have your company. I believe it high time you should think of administering another Emetic.

LETTERS